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1631 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-2818
PHONE 703-836-2222
800-822-6285
FAX 703-836-8015
www.nacac.com

May 27, 2003

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Congressman Fattah:

On behalf of the 8,000 members of the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC), I write to you to offer the association's support for HR 236, "The Student Bill of Rights." NACAC members, which include secondary school counselors and college and university admission officers nationwide, have long been concerned with school funding inequities in the United States. We support your effort to provide equal access to highly qualified teachers, smaller classes, rigorous academic standards, textbooks, technology, and other instructional materials and services.

NACAC members are particularly concerned that the unequal distribution of resources deprives students in underserved schools of valuable services, like precollege counseling, that could help pave the way to higher education.

NACAC's research has found that:

- Students from underserved settings are far less likely to receive comprehensive precollege counseling than students at schools in wealthier communities
- Students from underserved settings have less access to college planning guidance at home, particularly in homes where parents did not attend college
- Schools that employ precollege counselors and provide access to professional development for those counselors enjoy much higher rates of college attendance among students
- Students in rural and inner city public schools have extremely limited access to precollege counselors; the national ratio in public schools of students to counselors is nearly 500:1

We therefore applaud your effort, through HR 236, to provide access to quality guidance counseling, and to reduce the student-to-counselor ratio in the areas of highest need.

Access to postsecondary education is essential for success in America's economy. Our members believe that the federal government must take a leading role to ensure that states provide equitable funding for all students, and that HR 236 is an important step toward achieving equity in education.

NACAC members will continue to look to you for leadership and support on this issue. If we can be of assistance to you in your efforts, please contact David Hawkins, NACAC's director of public policy, at (703) 299-6809.

Sincerely,

Sandy Behrend
NACAC President

cc: Francine Block, Pennsylvania ACAC President
Gregory Eichhorn, Pennsylvania ACAC President-Elect
Bill McClintick, Pennsylvania ACAC Government Relations Chair